

Allocutio Toronto Senatus March 13, 2022. (Rev.) Joseph Moncada
Chapter 14 The Praesidium, Pages 84-85, 1.-8.

This chapter of the Handbook opens with the following, “The unit of the Legion of Mary is called a praesidium.”(p.84) In military language the word unit refers to a subdivision of a larger military grouping; so, by calling the praesidium the basic unit of the larger Legion army, the spiritual militancy of our organization is impressed upon our minds and indicated as a defining part of its reality.

In the ancient Roman army, a praesidium was a fortified post, a garrison where troops were stationed. Within the great Legion army, your praesidium is your post; it is the place where Our Lady has personally stationed you to be on duty as her Legion soldier.

If someone were to ask us “What is the Legion of Mary?” we could answer, it is Mary’s army! We belong to the crack troops, the special forces of the Church militant. Consider that all our spiritual warfare has its centre and high point in the Church’s liturgical worship. In preparation for the celebration of the Holy Mass, the priest recites the formula of intention--something unfamiliar to most of you—in which he intends to celebrate Mass for the “good... of all the Church militant.” Furthermore, this spiritual militancy of the Church is marvelously highlighted in the Extraordinary Form of the Mass, that is to say, the Traditional Latin Mass when in the preparatory prayers at the foot of the altar the priest prays, “Do me justice, O God and fight my fight against a faithless people; rescue me from the wicked and deceitful man.” Indeed, Our Lord’s coming to earth was an open declaration of war. By his holy passion and resurrection, he dealt a fatal blow to sin and Satan; and renews it for us in every Holy Mass. So, drawing divine power and inspiration from and modelled on the spiritual militancy of sacred worship, Mary’s apostolic troops gather in their praesidium meeting to plan and strategize legion works as battles fought for the Lord! Furthermore, dear legionaries, draw inspiration from this, all Legion action is a concentrated participation in the holy heel of Mary as it continually crushes the head of Satan. You too, have played and continue to play your part, as you add weight to the force of her heel.

Each praesidium is named after one of our blessed Lady’s titles. The meaning of the title of your praesidium is not inconsequential to its spirit. God in virtue of this title, especially by its invocation in the concluding prayers, offers and gives a certain character and particular charisms to your praesidium, while Mary confers some aspects of her own celestial fragrance, immaculate light and heavenly power. The same can be said of councils.

The invocation of the praesidium’s name is not simply an add-on to our Legion prayers but identifies it and your council with Mary, and with her to God. We could say, for example, titles such as Our Lady Seat of Wisdom petitions God’s wisdom for the praesidium so named, Virgin Most Powerful petitions power, and Mother of Perpetual Help invokes her unfailing assistance. The name of a praesidium or council in no way places a limit on Our Lady’s action upon it, but rather gives it a particular participation in the virtue or virtues or the mysteries attached to it. Just as God calls each person by name and that Christian name is the icon of the person, as

stated in the Catechism of the Catholic Church (No. 2158), so too, see in the name of your praesidium or council an icon of what you are called to be. Such is the hidden mystery and inner power of the name of your praesidium or council.

“Each praesidium has authority over all his members and power to control all their activities.”(p.84, 3.) Authority and the obligation to obey authority are correlative. Disobedience toward the authority of the praesidium ultimately undermines it, corrodes it, and demoralizes its members. The authority of the praesidium should always be exercised over its members justly, respectfully and ultimately charitably as one would towards one’s family members.

As Christ was a man for others, we, in imitation of him, are men for others; similarly, a legionary is a legionary for other legionaries. He exists only in relation to other legionaries. I will reiterate some practical advice: “Be quick to hear, slow to speak.”(cf. Jas 1:19) If by nature you are too slow to speak or speak infrequently then it’s time to go against your natural bent and speak more frequently, otherwise, you may be perceived as uninterested; and, if by nature you are too quick to speak, fast off the mark, understand that even if you do not intend it, it is uncharitable toward others and you may be perceived as domineering, and so it is time to slow down and give others some speaking room. If you speak too little, speak more; if you speak too much, speak less. Either way, you will be putting your brother and sister legionaries first.

The praesidium shall hold a meeting every week which shall be conducted according to the *Order of the Praesidium Meeting*. “This rule is absolutely invariable,”(p. 84, The Handbook) meaning that it cannot be changed or dispensed with. While there is no good reason or circumstance which dispenses with or shutdowns the weekly meeting, we experienced for the first time in Legion history an almost worldwide inability for our praesidia to meet in person because of the Covid-19 lockdown of our parish churches. We did not choose this but with Our Lady’s help, we will recover, rebuild and renew the Legion. Though, understandably, for a time we may lament and bemoan what has happened, trust that with Mary’s help we can come back stronger and better than ever if, we choose so.

A good question to ask ourselves, Mary, and Our Lord regarding our Legion in general, and your praesidium and council in particular, as we exit our Covid-19 lockdown should be, “Is there anything good to be found and acted upon as a result of the Covid-19 lockdown? My counsel is for each legionary to listen attentively and deeply in prayer to the Holy Spirit, and he will show you how to move forward. If we don’t ask the right questions we might seek the unsound answers and misguided solutions and make the wrong plans. It would be pride, arrogance and foolishness to act without humbly and fervently petitioning the Holy Spirit for his guidance. Let us not take him for granted, presumptuously believing that he will guide us well without intentionally turning to him and deliberately depending upon him. The Legion way is total dependence upon the Holy Spirit through a total dependence on Mary and her intercession. (cf. The Legion Promise)

I encourage you again, the very question you should table as the subject of your conversations and deliberations and a reference point that you return to over again in your praesidium and council meetings and personal prayer, at least for the next few months or until you arrive at your discernment, is the following: "Is there anything good to be found and acted upon in our current post-Covid-19 lockdown situation?"